



4. Next Steps

- Implementation Strategy
- Development Program
- Project Phasing

Downtown Entertainment

The universal response to an inquiry for directions to a restaurant or a place to “hang out” in Columbus should be; “Go to Fourth and Washington for Food and Fun!”

Implementation Strategy

Overview

Already recognized as a workplace and center for entertainment and recreation, Downtown Columbus has the opportunity to leverage its reputation in the region and establish itself as a unique regional hub of diverse urban lifestyle options. To achieve this position in the market, emphasis should be placed on the following core strategies and actions:

Strategy A: Grow Downtown's hospitality and amateur sports activities and venues

- Action A1. Capture more of the increasing number of Columbus-area room nights in the downtown; target business travelers; amateur sports participants, and tourists by building a hotel.
- Action A2. While not all amateur sports facilities should or could be located near downtown, a significant venue should be developed on real estate near downtown.
- Action A3. Serve the surplus demand for downtown business meeting space and address the need for indoor support functions for festivals, amateur sports tournaments and Mill Race Park events with new meeting facilities.

Strategy B: Attract discretionary spending, both visitor and resident, by introducing new and unique food, retail, and entertainment offerings

- Action B1. Build off of the current entertainment and dining base in Downtown by attracting both new and existing diverse and unique venues to key locations in Downtown.
- Action B2. Promote Downtown as a destination for Columbus residents and visitors looking for “third place” hangouts, entertainment, and fine foods.

Strategy C: Expand Downtown housing to include quality market-rate housing in and near Downtown

- Action C1. Identify land ready for redefinition and appropriate for new mixed-use housing development to serve as a catalyst for “downtown” housing as an option in Columbus.
- Action C2. Encourage adaptive reuse of existing, underutilized upper floors of commercial buildings along Washington Street.

Strategy D: Continue diversification of Downtown users to include expanded adult education offerings

- Action D1. Implement “incubator” facility for one of the adult education institutions in Columbus.
- Action D2. Begin a study and evaluation process to determine the scope of a potential adult education “branch” campus in Downtown.

Strategy E: Address barriers to downtown development including parking convenience and affordability, recurring odor problems, and the need for overall development management

- Action E1. Build one or more parking garages to increase the number of spaces available within and close to the commercial core.
- Action E2. Define and implement a parking program for the downtown that “sorts” users (workers, overnight guests, short-term visitors, etc.) and identifies appropriate public parking with clearly visible signage.
- Action E2. Fund and empower a Downtown advocate, empowered to facilitate development and programs supporting economic vitality.

Strategy F: Retain and grow the current business base through ongoing support and reinforcement initiatives

- Action F1. Organize and facilitate an incubator and support program for independent retailers, with special emphasis on sustaining current enterprises.
- Action F2. Develop and fund a capital improvements revolving loan fund that targets key facility infrastructure needs (e.g. ADA and other code requirements) that currently limit the reuse of existing buildings, especially upper floors.

The Columbus Entertainment District (CED)

Within Downtown, the Fourth and Washington Streets intersection (as a sub-district of the Civic & Entertainment District) has the greatest opportunity to achieve short-term change while building momentum for future development investments. Findings identified during this study that support a focused investment in an entertainment district centered on the Fourth and Washington Streets intersection include:

- A cluster of existing food and drink establishments
- Land that is available for development
- Multiple blocks ready for redefinition
- Potential for connecting with proposed Riverfront Development and Mill Race Park
- Extensive calendar of annual events on key sites around Fourth Street
- History of many cultural events at several locations including the Commons, kidscommons, and Crump Theater and presented by multiple groups including the Columbus Area Arts Council, downtown retailers, and civic organizations
- Several of the strongest retail blocks in Downtown nearby
- Opportunity to address commonly recognized parking issues for a wide variety of users



The Columbus Entertainment District should include imaginative and creative features that encourage people to tell others about their exciting and interesting experience in Downtown Columbus.



The proposed Civic & Entertainment District will offer residents and visitors an engaging “24-hour” destination in Downtown Columbus. As shown in the images above and below, the district should be the showpiece of Columbus with an aesthetic and energizing quality unlike anything currently offered in the region.



Columbus Entertainment District (CED) at Fourth and Washington Streets



Legend

Existing Entertainment Venues

1. Yes Cinema
2. Bistro 310
3. Food Court
4. Commons
5. Zaharakos Confectionary
6. kidscommons (2005)
7. Art Columbus Gallery
8. Crump Theater
9. 4th Street Bar
10. Smith's Row
11. Divino
12. Papa's Downtown Deli
13. The Columbus Bar
14. Columbus Inn
15. Commons Cinema
16. Columbus Visitors Center
17. Bartholomew County Public Library
18. Columbus Museum of Art & Design

Development Tiers

- Tier 1
- Tier 2
- Tier 3
- Tier 4

Downtown Districts

- New Urban Residential District
- Uptown Urban District
- Civic and Entertainment District
- Support and Expansion District
- Downtown Residential District
- Greenbelt
- Undeveloped Land
- Columbus Entertainment District
- People Trail
- Key CED Streets

Next Steps

Downtown Columbus | Strategic Planning Project



The Streets

Development initiatives should work towards enriching “street life” along the Fourth and Washington Street corridors within the CED. Developments should be encouraged to keep the ground floor open to the street (no blank walls) and to “advertise” the offerings in their buildings clearly, in an animated manner.

With all buildings built up to the sidewalks, the public right-of-way should also reflect the festive nature of an entertainment district. Initially this can be done with a simple “banner and benches” program that promotes key events and provides outdoor gathering places. Once the district has captured its market, more targeted improvements with a higher level of investment should be considered.

The intersection of Fourth and Washington Streets bears significance within the proposed entertainment district. The southwest corner is especially significant. The Commons has a history of hosting a wide variety of important, “milestone” events for the City of Columbus. Consideration should be given to recognizing this significance with improvements such as an appropriately scaled sculpture, a stronger sense of the space as a place to gather, and redefinition of the current architecture.

The intersection of Brown and Fourth Streets is a visual and functional terminus for the entertainment district. Several key anchors such as a hotel, theme restaurant, and shops are appropriate here. Consideration should be given for celebrating this clustering of venues with a gathering space and “animated” feature such as a fountain or tower.

Development Program

Initially, re-investment in Downtown should be primarily directed towards securing its role as a key area for amateur sports and recreation, learning and culture, living and shopping, and dining and entertainment. The Columbus Entertainment District will be an important catalyst for securing these roles for Downtown, with the introduction of a competitive amateur sports complex near downtown and in the greenest being developed in tandem.

Developing the CED will require differentiating the Fourth and Washington Street intersection (and its proximity to Mill Race Park) as a place that offers an experience only available in one place in the region. Emphasis should be placed on attracting diverse activities and venues that offer choices to residents as well as out of town visitors that keep them coming back again and again. This includes creating new places for recreation, cultural events, educational activities, dining, lifestyle retail and entertainment, as well as stabilizing existing venues. Subsequently, consideration should also be given to increasing quantity and quality of housing and reinforcing unique retail offerings in the CED. Public investment should be principally directed towards overall management of the redevelopment program through expansion of city-managed recreational spaces, addressing parking needs, and implementing right-of-way enhancements.

Mixed use development, which can include a mixture of residential, parking garages, and commercial space on the same property, are proposed throughout the CED as a means to re-establish the core of Downtown as an interesting place that is pedestrian friendly, constantly invigorating to be part of, and is economically vital. This approach applies to both new and existing property within the proposed CED.

Each of the eight and a half blocks within the Columbus Entertainment District plays a part in shaping an identity for this area. The development emphasis varies from west to east along Fourth Street. The six western blocks fronting Fourth Street are ready for redefinition. Reinforcement of retail and entertainment businesses is the principal strategy for the eastern two and a half blocks in the district.

The two of largest properties within the CED that are ready for redefinition include the Commons Mall (2 city blocks) and the Commons Mall Parking (about 2.5 city blocks). The Post Office property (1 city block) and the City Parking Lot (.5 city blocks) represent the balance of the property ready for redefinition.

As part of an overall strategy, the Commons Mall Parking located between Lindsay and Brown should be developed to serve as a transition between proposed Riverfront improvements, Mill Race Park, and the proposed mixed-use development along Fourth and Washington Streets. It also serves as an important visual and place defining terminus for Fourth Street. Flanked by the most significant traffic counts in Downtown, this six-acre site can bring to Downtown key uses that rely on these indicators and could benefit from surrounding recreational and entertainment activities.

The Commons Mall property has a two blocks frontage on Fourth Street, the western half of the three hundred blocks of Washington Street and benefits from high traffic counts on Brown Street. This development program calls for a two stage approach to reactivating this block. With an eventual overall redefinition of both these blocks in mind, interim development activities should focus incrementally, increasing this property’s role in an active and vital CED.

Fronting Fourth and Fifth Streets, the Post Office and City Parking Lot blocks have the opportunity to influence the further development of the contemporary architecture character of Fifth Street and play a role in activating the northern block faces of Fourth Street. Located between the Fourth and Washington Street intersection and the Commons Mall Parking property, these properties should sustain an energetic street and commercial mix.

The development program is organized around four development initiatives or tiers of activity. This development flow recognizes the phased nature of development and offers an incremental approach to activating the CED. The following summarize the character and expectations for each tier of development for the Columbus Entertainment District:

Tier 1 Develop Currently Underutilized Parking Lots Commons Mall Parking north of Fourth Street between Lindsay and Brown Streets and between Jackson Street and the alley to the east

During the first development tier for the CED, emphasis will be placed on the northern segment of the Commons Mall Parking, retaining the current parking and automotive center until the fourth development tier. This first tier will focus on attracting more visitors to Downtown through a hospitality oriented venue.

New development on the Commons Mall Parking north of Fourth Street as well as other development activities will require a re-definition of Downtown parking facilities. As part of the redefinition surface parking in the half block north of Fourth Street between Jackson Street and the alley should be converted to a parking structure (as recommended by several past downtown parking studies) that would serve the needs of employers and retail (e.g. Dell Brothers) or dining (e.g. Papa’s Deli) customers in the Fourth and Washington Street sub-district. The first level of the parking deck should include new dining, entertainment, and retail establishments.

For the blocks along Washington Street, reinforcement activities should be focused on supporting existing retail, encouraging the transition of first floor space from service to retail where possible, and introducing quality housing in underutilized upper floors.

Tier 2. Develop Mill Race Sports Complex

Development of the land across the river from Mill Race Park into championship-caliber playing fields for amateur sports would draw people into the Downtown, where they would find hotels, dining, entertainment, and retail opportunities nearby. Adjacency to these downtown services will make this type of development a unique project within the amateur sports market. Development of this area for sports fields suits the limitation defined by its tendency to flood. These improvements would also work towards furthering the Columbus' downtown gateway initiative along State Road 46 .

Tier 3. Redefine Current Post Office Block

Redefinition of this block from a single low traffic and low intensity use to a mixed-use development to include street level dining, entertainment, and retail businesses with high-quality housing above, will activate a key block within the entertainment district.

The Great Good Place

by Ray Oldenburg, 1999, New York: Marlowe and Company.
Reviewed by Jerry Kloby

One of the important ingredients in building community is a physical design that facilitates social interaction. It is difficult for people to develop the networks that are a crucial part of human social systems unless there are places for encounters to take place. Without casual regular encounters it is very difficult for all the other steps in community building to take place: discussion, organization, action, accomplishment, etc. Indeed, one of the main points that Benjamin Barber makes in A Place for Us is that enlarging and reinforcing public space is an important element in strengthening civil society.

These are the sorts of public spaces that The Great Good Place is about. Sociologist Ray Oldenburg refers to them as “third places”, the first two being home and the workplace. Third places are the core settings for informal public life, they are places where people can meet old friends, make new acquaintances, discuss the important issues of the day, and temporarily throw off the weight of the world that can drag them down. Oldenburg claims that involvement in informal public life has important psychological, social, and political implications, and such involvement is made possible by the existence of third places.

Some essential ingredients for successful third places include:

1. They must be relatively inexpensive to enter and to purchase food and drinks.
2. They must be highly accessible; ideally one should be able to get there by foot from work or one's home.
3. A number of people can be expected to be there on a daily basis.
4. All people should feel welcome; it should be easy to get into a conversation. A person who goes there should be able to find both old and new friends each time they visit.

